

Animal Health Safeguarding Review Implementation Progress Report September 2004

I. Progress achieved in implementing the review:

Surveillance

- National biosurveillance integration system – VS participated with representatives from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and other agencies in meetings to discuss the development of the National Biosurveillance Integration System. The national biosurveillance initiative is designed to integrate information from numerous agencies to increase early warning capabilities. Safeguarding Review recommendations #6 and 7 call for ensuring that the design of the national surveillance system provides for early detection of foreign and emerging animal diseases.

Response

- Biosecurity practices on U.S. dairy farms – VS released a new report which takes an in-depth look at biosecurity practices on U.S. dairy operations. The 46 page report, “Animal Disease Exclusion Practices on U.S. Dairy Operations, 2002” was widely distributed. Updated information on biosecurity practices assists the development of guidelines and response plans as called for in Safeguarding Review recommendation 107.
- New emergency response course piloted – VS piloted the new *Agriculture Emergency Response and Weapons of Mass Destruction* training the week of September 8th. The training covers chemical, biological, and radiological weapons; triage techniques; personal protective equipment; decontamination; national incident management system; and sampling and monitoring. VS intends to offer additional sessions of the course in FY 05. Training is emphasized in a number of Safeguarding Review recommendations (#s 113 and 145).
- Emergency management satellite seminar – The 9th annual Satellite Seminar for Emergency Preparedness was held on September 16th. The seminar focused on collaboration and coordination between DHS and USDA/APHIS. The emergency management satellite seminars help keep state and federal partners up-to-date and ready to respond to emergencies as called for in Safeguarding Review recommendation 114.

Exclusion

- New port facility opens –The new state-of-the art Miami Animal Import Center opened in September. The new facility offers 60 stalls for imports, 24 stalls for export and avian quarantine areas for both commercial and pet birds. While not specifically addressed in the Safeguarding Review, new facilities in Miami will allow APHIS to better serve importers and exporters and ensure that animals imported into the U.S. fully meet import requirements.
- International foreign animal disease course held –The Fifth International FAD course was held September 14 – 24th on Plum Island. Twenty-three veterinarians attended representing Afghanistan, Austria, Belgium, Bermuda, Bosnia Herzegovina, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Dominica, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Mexico, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent, Trinidad, and Turkey. Safeguarding Review recommendation #48 encourages increased assistance in foreign countries as a means of protecting the United States from foreign animal diseases.
- Emerging animal health issues course held – VS held a training course on emerging animal health issues identification and analysis the week of September 14th. There were 27 participants representing numerous countries and organizations in attendance. Approaches used around the world for identification, analysis, and assessment of emerging issues were presented. Safeguarding Review recommendation #48 encourages increased assistance in foreign countries as a means of protecting the United States from foreign animal diseases.

Laboratory Systems

- New laboratory space – VS began relocating to its new facilities in Ames. These new facilities are part of the Ames Modernization effort and will provide VS with the ability to increase testing capacity and security. Safeguarding Review recommendation #94 supports implementation of the APHIS-ARS Master Plan.

Information Technology

- Confidentiality Task Force – VS has established a task force to develop a strategy for addressing confidentiality of all types of information collected by VS. The task force held its first meeting in September and task force members were briefed on issues regarding the Freedom of Information Act and the Privacy Act. The task force also began reviewing major data systems within VS. Addressing confidentiality concerns is necessary to carry out Safeguarding Review recommendations regarding a national surveillance system and a laboratory network.
- Training class for new systems –VS provided training in September which highlighted changes in VS systems resulting from implementation of the

Government Paperwork Elimination Act (GPEA). A number of Import/Export processes and routines are changing as a result of the increased use of electronic forms. Several Safeguarding Review recommendations encourage the use of new technologies (#s 3, 64, and 77).

II. Implementation activities:

Four action plans submitted by the Laboratory Systems Issue Group were approved during the VS Management Team meeting the week of September 13th. These action plans covered the following key issues: the National Animal Health Laboratory Network, Test Validation, Quality Assurance and Laboratory Accreditation, and NVSL Customer Service.

The Information Technology Issue Group held conference calls on September 22 and 29th to continue work on action plans. Additional calls will be held in October.

The Exclusion and Coordinated Response Issue Groups are planning face-to-face meetings in November to continue work on action plans.

Comments and questions regarding this report can be directed to Carol Tuszynski at Area Code (970) 494-7320.

